

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06029 090955Z

11

ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

----- 071184

O 090818Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1018

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6029

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: DIALOGUE WITH SYRIANS RE FUTURE OF WEST BEIRUT

1. AS PART OF OUR DIALOGUE WITH TOP-LEVEL SYRIAN OFFICIALS CONCERNING

SYRIAN INTENTIONS IN LEBANON, I RECOMMEND THAT WE ASK SYRIANS WHAT THEY HAVE IN MIND OVER COMING WEEKS AND MONTHS RE WEST BEIRUT. WHILE IT IS VERY LIKELY SYRIANS THEMSELVES DON'T YET HAVE A CLEAR ANSWER, RAISING THIS WITH THEM OFFERS US AN OPPORTUNITY TO DRAW TO SYRIAN ATTENTION A NUMBER OF CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING U.S. INTERESTS WHICH THEY SHOULD BE AWARE OF AS THEY PLOT THEIR NEXT MOVES.

2. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WITH POTENTIAL BREAKDOWN OF ARAB LEAGUE NEGOTIATING EFFORT AND PATENT UNDESIRABILITY FROM SYRIAN POINT OF VIEW

OF LETTING LEBANESE SITUATION CONTINUE TO FESTER INDEFINITELY, SYRIANS

WILL PROBABLY BE FORECED EVENTUALLY INTO EITHER BLOCKADING WEST BEIRUT

OR ATTACKING IT IN PROCESS OF ATTEMPTING TO BREAK BACK OF PLO. WHICH-

EVER HAPPENS, AND IN VIEW OF SET BACKS WHICH PALESTINIAN MILITANTS AREJ SUFFERING ELWSEWHERE IN LEBANON, IT IS REMOTELY POSSIBLE THAT PLO WILL AT SOME POINT CONCEIVE OF AND USE WEST BEIRUT--WHERE IT REMAINS DOMINANT--AS A KIND OF FINAL REDOUBT. THIS MAY NOT HAPPEN FOR

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 06029 090955Z

SOME TIME AND VERY LIKELY NOT AT ALL, BUT IT IS A CONTINGENCY THAT WE

SHOULD NOT WHOLLY IGNORE. ITS IMPLICATIONS WITH REGARD TO THIS EMBASSY AND AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS IN WEST BEIRUT ARE DISTURBING.

3. AT MOMENT PLO TAKES GREAT PRIDE IN ITS ROLE AS PROTECTOR OF WESTERN EMBASSIES AND WESTERN INSTITUTIONS IN WEST BEIRUT. BUT IF PLO CONTINUES TO SUFFER REVERSES AND FINDS ITSELF WITH BACK TO WALL LITERALLY HAVING NOWHERE ELSE TO GO, PLO'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THESE INSTITUTIONS--IN PARTICULAR U.S. EMBASSY AND AMERICAN UNIVERSITY--COULD CHANGE DRASTICALLY. AS WE ALL KNOW, FUNDAMENTALLY PLO HAS LONG CONSIDERED U.S. AS ITS ENEMY. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR, WHO MAINTAINS CLOSE CONTACT WITH PLO LEADERS IN BEIRUT, REAFFIRMED TO ME A FEW DAYS AGO THAT THIS CONTINUES TO REFLECT PLO ATTITUDES. AS LONG AS THINGS ARE GOING WELL FOR IT, PLO REVELS IN THE PRESTIGE AND STATURE WHICH IT DERIVES FROM ITS ROLE AS PARAMOUNT AUTHORITY IN WEST BEIRUT. BUT IF PLO FORTUNES SHOULD TURN, WE COULD CONCEIVABLE FACE PROSPECT OF BEING HELD ITS HOSTAGE.

4. ABSENCE OF PLO PROTECTION IN ITSELF WOULD POSE SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR US, BUT ACTIVE PLO HOSTILITY TOWARD US, IN ABSENCE OF ALTERNATIVE SECURITY FORCE, WOULD PUT US IN UNTENABLE POSITION. IN THIS SITUATION MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS, SUCH AS PFLP, MIGHT TAKE EXTREME MEASURES AGAINST US. WE WOULD BE IN A VERY DICEY SITUATION.

5. WE WOULD THEN HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO CLOSE DOWN EMBASSY AND TO TRY TO EVACUATE ALL AMERICANS, BY WHATEVER MEANS POSSIBLE. IF EMBASSY CLOSES DOWN, SO WOULD AUB HOSPITAL (DR. ASPER, HQOSPITAL HEAD, HAS TOLD ME THIS CATEGORICALLY), AND POSSIBLY AUB AS WELL. AUB OFFICIALS ARE CONVINCED THAT ONCE THEY CLOSE DOWN, HOSPITAL AND UNIVERSITY ARE UNLIKELY EVER TO REOPEN--AT LEAST AS AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS. AMONG OTHER THINGS, PLO OR LEFTIST LEBANESE ELEMENTS WOULD IMMEDIATELY OCCUPY ALL BUILDINGS. SINCE THESE INSTITUTIONS HAVE PROVIDED AN IMPORTANT WINDOW TO THE UNITED STATES, THEIR SHUTDOWN WOULD REPRESENT A SET BACK TO AMERICAN INTERESTS. TODAY IN WEST BEIRUT, DESPITE WIDE BELIEF IN U.S. COLLUSION WITH ISRAEL, PRO-AMERICAN ATTITUDES REPORTEDLY CONTINUE TO PREVAIL THANKS IN GREAT PART TO THE GOOD WORKS OF THESE INSTITUTIONS.

6. SO WHAT I PROPOSE IS THAT, IN SEEKING TO ELICIT FROM SYRIANS WHAT THEY HAVE IN MIND FOR WEST BEIRUT, WE POINT OUT SOME OF THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 06029 090955Z

FOREGOING CONSIDERATIONS WHICH IMPINGE ON U.S. INTERESTS. WE WOULD CERTAINLY HOPE THAT SYRIANS WOULD DO NOTHING WHICH WOULD ENDANGER LIVES OF AMERICANS IN BEIRUT, OR FORCE CLOSING OF AMERICAN EMBASSY AND AMERICAN PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS. AT MINIMUM WE WOULD HOPE THAT SYRIANS MIGHT ALERT US IN ADVANCE TO ANY POSSIBLE MAJOR MILITARY ACTIONS--EITHER DIRECTLY INTO WEST BEIRUT OR ELSEWHERE--WHICH MIGHT INDUCE A PLO BACKLASH AGAINST AMERICANS. THIS WOULD GIVE US TIME TO GET OUT.

7. I REALIZE THAT WE MAY BE ASKING TOO MUCH OF SYRIANS, WITH WHOM OUR RELATIONS ARE ONLY CORRECT, BUT I THINK WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION AT LEAST TO MAKE SYRIANS AWARE OF OUR INTERESTS AND CONCERNS REGARDING WEST BEIRUT.

8. SUGGEST DEPT REPEAT TO AMMAN, DAMASCUS, JIDDA.
SEELYE

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WEST BANK, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, SECURITY, CAT-B, POLITICAL LEADERS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, MILITARY PLANS, DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT06029
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760776/aaaacopg.tel
Line Count: 123
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DIALOGUE WITH SYRIANS RE FUTURE OF WEST BEIRUT
TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, LE, SY, US, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006